



For Immediate Release

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Neshaminy Teachers Say School District Threatens Viability of Talks By Bringing Blogosphere Sideshow to the Bargaining Table

December 29, 2010 - LANGHORNE, PA—Leaders of the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers today called on school district officials to clarify their commitment to the current collective bargaining process following their actions earlier this week that led to the cancellation of a scheduled negotiating session.

NFT President Louise Boyd challenged the accuracy of media reports based on a statement posted Tuesday night on the school district's website. "Negotiators for Neshaminy's teachers did not refuse to discuss healthcare benefits at Tuesday's session," she said. "It is unclear to us why the chairman of the school board would make such a representation to the community."

Other accounts of Tuesday's aborted bargaining session said the school district negotiators decided not to participate in discussions because of a statement by Boyd reported in a Philadelphia Inquirer story earlier this month. In that story, Boyd merely stated the belief of NFT members that it is not fair or equitable for the school district to expect teachers to take a cut in overall compensation when their duties and responsibilities are expanding.

"Egged on by the teacher-bashing crowd whose venom up to now has been confined to blogs and websites, the district's negotiators conjured a confrontation that didn't exist, suggesting that teachers are unwilling to compromise," Boyd said. "That simply is false, and the history of our negotiations makes that clear."

Teachers' negotiators pointed out that the school district continues to stand pat with a contract proposal that has remained essentially unchanged over more than two years of talks. "If anything," Boyd said, "their approach to negotiations demonstrate that the

school district—not its teachers—has refused to seriously consider possible compromises.”

Meanwhile, teachers have offered compromises throughout more than two years of negotiations. Since their original contract proposal in 2008, Neshaminy teachers have made two formal counter-proposals and shifted their positions on several key issues.

“This week district officials failed Neshaminy students and parents by throwing away a valuable chance to make progress toward a new agreement,” Boyd said. “We think this behavior was childish and unprofessional.”

Teachers are ready to resume negotiations as soon as possible. “School officials and their bargaining team must now decide whether they want to commit to serious, fact-driven talks or continue with the strategy they adopted this week that ignores facts and instead takes its cues from the constant banter of mean-spirited, anti-union rhetoric from a small online faction and—surprisingly—a few board members.”

Neshaminy teachers are working under a contract that expired in July 2008.

“As a new year begins, we are looking ahead to the new semester and preparing students for upcoming state tests. Teachers are eager to reach an agreement and end the distraction that the talks have become for them, as well as for parents and school administrators,” Boyd said.

Teachers remain hopeful, Boyd said, that school district negotiators will realize that “there can be no dialogue on the issues unless both sides show up at the bargaining table committed to do more than simple posturing.”

She continued, “Everyone should focus on our common goal of reaching an agreement that supports the important work that teachers in the Neshaminy School District do every day to make a difference in the lives of the children in their classrooms.”

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